

of Susan Combs, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea", the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) would have voted "yea", and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 140 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Barrasso	Graham	Perdue
Blackburn	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hawley	Risch
Boozman	Hoeben	Roberts
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Burr	Inhofe	Rounds
Cantwell	Isakson	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Sasse
Collins	Jones	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	King	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sinema
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Manchin	Thune
Daines	McConnell	Tillis
Enzi	McSally	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Young
Gardner	Paul	

NAYS—37

Baldwin	Hassan	Schatz
Bennet	Heinrich	Shumer
Blumenthal	Hirono	Shaheen
Booker	Kaine	Smith
Brown	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cardin	Leahy	Tester
Carper	Markey	Udall
Casey	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Durbin	Peters	Wyden
Feinstein	Reed	
Harris	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—7

Alexander	Gillibrand	Warren
Cassidy	Moran	
Duckworth	Sanders	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 56, the nays are 37.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Susan Combs, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TARIFFS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, since President Trump announced his intent to impose tariffs on goods imported to the United States from Mexico, I have been perplexed at the reaction from our Democratic colleagues on both sides of the Capitol. They seem to have washed their hands of the humanitarian crisis occurring at the border.

Again, these are President Obama's words. In 2014 he identified this crush of humanity coming across from Central America into the United States claiming asylum as a humanitarian and security crisis. But our Democratic friends are simply washing their hands of any responsibility and have not offered any solutions or any ideas on how to solve the problem.

Perhaps they feel like this is President Trump's problem, but this is more than just the President's problem. It is America's problem and challenge: How do we deal with this flood of humanity?

I would like to be clear on one point. I agree with the President that Mexico needs to do more to staunch the flow of people across its borders and into the United States. They must do more and we must do more to stop this mass migration, but any action must prioritize both our country's physical and our economic security.

Tariffs are not my first choice on how to address this problem. In fact, that is not the most responsible way to address this. The most responsible way to address it is by taking up, debating, and voting on bipartisan legislation that would actually fix the vulnerabilities in our current law that are being exploited by the human smugglers who are charging between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per person to smuggle people from Central America, across Mexico, and into the United States.

Tariffs, on the other hand, would be a massive tax. The U.S. Chamber estimates that Texas alone would face \$5.35 billion in increased costs as a result of a 5-percent tariff that could take effect as early as Monday. This translates into about \$1,000 more on a car.

I am happy that the Vice President and Secretary Pompeo are meeting with the Mexican Foreign Minister and other officials today. Actually, I am encouraged by the response of the Mexican Government, and I can only hope that they come up with some sort of agreement so that these tariffs do not go into effect.

Stronger action by Mexico would be a step in the right direction, but it doesn't come close to solving the underlying problem. I feel like a broken record at times, constantly reminding my colleagues here of the challenges we are facing in Texas because of this crisis.

More than 100,000 people illegally crossed our southern border between March and April—100,000. That is not a combined figure. It is about 100,000 each month. The Department of Home-

land Security has not released statistics for the month of May, but I am not expecting any good news.

As a matter of fact, if nothing changes, the pull factors—the reasons why people would leave their homes in Central America, cross Mexico, and make this dangerous trip into the United States—are doing nothing but getting worse, encouraging more and more people to take that dangerous trip.

Unlike in previous years, the vast majority of those crossing aren't from Mexico, as I said. So far this fiscal year, 74 percent of the Border Patrol's apprehensions across the southern border were people coming from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

And if you talk to the McAllen Sector Border Patrol chief, he will tell you that last year alone people from 140 different countries—140 different countries—came across our southern border with Mexico and into the United States. That is because they realize, if you can fly or get any way you can—take a boat, swim, get to Central America—you can make your way up from Central America into the United States. The individuals illegally entering our country are overwhelmingly either families or unaccompanied children, which means we don't have the facilities, the resources, or legal authorities. We need to expeditiously process them and care for them properly.

What is more, 70 percent of unaccompanied children and family unit apprehensions are occurring in just two sectors—El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley—making the State of Texas and its border communities the hardest hit.

We are ground zero for this crisis. As I said, this is equated to an all-out humanitarian crisis along the border. Our law enforcement officials, city leaders, nongovernmental organizations—everyone who wants to treat these migrants compassionately and appropriately is being completely overwhelmed by the massive waves of people who are entering our country.

We need to get to work on both short-term and long-term solutions.

First, we need to get additional funding to the departments and agencies that are trying to manage this crisis and care for the migrants in their custody. Without action here in Congress, funding could dry up by the end of this month, creating an even more dire situation. That should be our most immediate focus—getting funding to the agencies responsible for managing this crisis. I know the appropriators are working on this, and I hope we can come up with a solution soon because time is not on our side. But that is not a fix; that is a patch.

Any sort of lasting change cannot be solved by a funding bill or by tariffs. It has to be solved by something only Congress can do—passing legislation that addresses the root of the problem.

From what I know, there is only one bill that would address this humanitarian crisis at the border, a bill that

already has Republican and Democratic support. That is a bill I introduced called the HUMANE Act.

I have learned a lot when it comes to legislating on immigration issues. A lot of folks are more interested in talking about it than they are interested in finding a solution. But that wasn't the case when I picked up the phone and called my friend HENRY CUELLAR, a Democrat from Laredo, TX. Obviously, I am a Republican. HENRY is a Democrat in the House. But he understands this situation better than most, and he has been my consistent ally in working on a number of ways to bring common-sense reform to these issues.

We don't always agree on everything, but we do agree on some things, and where we do agree, we work together to try to provide effective solutions. As I mentioned, we introduced the HUMANE Act last month, which will make targeted, long-overdue reforms to our immigration system. Importantly, it includes provisions that both Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree on. First, it closes a major loophole that is often exploited by families and the human smugglers who move them across the border illegally. This is the Flores settlement agreement. This is a lawsuit and a settlement.

Flawed court rulings have looked at the Flores settlement and have turned this once well-intentioned agreement into a major pull factor for migrants hoping to game the system. They know we can't detain children and family units for more than 20 days, and they are using it against us to game the system, to win, to successfully place people into the United States because we simply don't have the authorities to detain them until they can present their claims to an immigration judge.

Rather than single adults arriving at the border alone, we know that the smugglers are sending children, sometimes unaccompanied, sometimes posing as a family unit when they are not even biologically related—so much that the Department of Homeland Security has now been giving DNA testing to determine whether an adult is falsely claiming a child to be their biological offspring so that they can make their way into the country, exploiting the gaps and loopholes that I have talked about.

Children are literally being kidnapped to serve as free tickets into the United States. Tragically, they are often abused, physically or sexually, along the way, and many arrive at our border in critical health.

I have shared the concern expressed by Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle when we see children die in some of our facilities along the border, but that is not because they got sick there in the first place. They got ill on the way, coming from Central America, across Mexico, into the United States, suffering from exposure, being exposed to all sorts of infectious diseases. By the time they get into U.S. custody,

some of them simply don't survive. That is a terrible human tragedy. But the problem is not trying to create more medical facilities at the border; it should be to try to stop people from making this dangerous trek in the first place.

The HUMANE Act would stop that practice by clarifying that the Flores agreement applies only to unaccompanied children, which was the original agreement, not family units as it was subsequently interpreted by another court. It would provide more time for processing and immigration proceedings to take place before families could be released from custody.

Under the current practice, because the numbers are overwhelming the capacity of the immigration courts to hear these cases—and there is simply not enough time to get to these cases when you have to release them in 20 days—they are given a notice to appear for a future court date. Guess what. The vast majority of them simply don't show up for that court hearing, and they remain in the United States perhaps for the rest of their lives unless, perhaps, they get picked up for an unrelated crime.

Our legislation would require that all accompanied children be processed exactly the same, regardless of their country of origin.

Under current law, children from Mexico or Canada can be promptly returned home. But the process for other countries moves much more slowly and represents another vulnerability in our legal authorities. I believe we should make every effort to safely return all children to their home countries as soon as possible, regardless of what country they are from.

This bill includes other provisions to protect children who have been brought to our border, such as biometric screening to ensure that they are literally the biological offspring of the people who claim to be their parents rather than a human trafficker.

It would also place prohibitions on certain individuals who would serve as guardians. For example, no child should be released into the custody of a sex offender or human trafficker. We don't have that confidence now.

The HUMANE Act would enable families to stay together. There has been a lot of discussion about separation of children from their families. We want them to stay together. I think we all agree that should be the standard, but we also need to streamline the processing of those in custody.

Consistent with the recommendations by the bipartisan Department of Homeland Security Advisory Committee, the bill would require the Department of Homeland Security to establish at least four regional processing centers along the southern border to house and process these families. They would literally serve as a one-stop shop, with Department of Homeland Security personnel, folks from Custom and Border Protection, ICE—

Immigration and Customs Enforcement—the immigration service, and FEMA all working together to assist migrants and working to process their claims on a timely and respectful basis. Asylum officers would also be required to be onsite to adjudicate claims as soon as they could and expedite the entire process, which we hope would begin to ease the burden of our current debilitating immigration court backlog.

I believe that if we actually did this, people with legitimate claims would find their claims recognized earlier, and people with illegitimate claims would be returned to their country of origin, which is the way our laws should be enforced.

It is important to recognize that we should not only enforce our immigration laws; as long as they are on the books, we ought to use the time-honored principle of deterrence. In other words, if people realize they are paying good money to try to make their way into the United States in the hands of a human smuggler but because of the way we have corrected and reformed our laws, it is no longer possible to exploit the vulnerabilities of the system, fewer and fewer of them will actually start that trek—that dangerous trek from their home in Central America.

So deterrence is something we need to use on our side, and right now there is no deterrence because the smugglers know this is a money-making machine for them. They care nothing about the people involved. They are commodity agnostic. They will just as soon traffic someone for sex as they will move a migrant from Central America for economic reasons or move drugs from across the border into the United States. We need to deter all sorts of criminal activity like that.

In addition to these changes, the legislation also includes other provisions that I think are just commonsense improvements, like additional Customs and Border Protection personnel and training for CBP and ICE employees who work with children.

There is one last point on what is happening at the border and its impact on the economy and trade. In Laredo, TX alone—I think it just surpassed Los Angeles as the largest port of entry into the United States—there are between 14,000 and 16,000 trucks a day that traverse the U.S.-Mexico border between Nuevo Laredo and Laredo. A lot of that is a part of the manufacturing process, which happens on both sides of the border. But when these trucks can't make their way across the border on a timely basis, then that means the parts or the manufacturing processes fall apart—and the border economies.

I would argue the larger economy in the United States is threatened when just-in-time inventory control no longer works. If you are living in Detroit, MI, and you are expecting that the delivery of a part coming from Mexico will make its way to Michigan

in time to build a car, you can't do it. Eventually, this is going to damage our economy and kill jobs.

So I would like to reiterate, in conclusion, that the HUMANE Act is bipartisan; it is bicameral; and it would provide real relief for folks in Texas and other border states who are struggling to manage the crisis. Most importantly, it would be a much more humane way to treat these children and families who are flooding across our southern border.

I know most of our congressional Democratic friends have adopted the posture of reflexively standing against the President on anything and everything he asks for rather than standing for policies that would actually become the law and make the situation better.

I think this is a much better solution than tariffs on Mexican goods brought into the United States.

The President's team is negotiating the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the USMCA, and I am hopeful we can get that passed here in the Congress once it is sent over from the administration. But I worry that not only are these tariffs that are potentially being placed on goods brought in the United States going to hurt our booming economy and jobs here, they also are going to jeopardize the passage of the USMCA—the successor to NAFTA, which I think we should all acknowledge is a big, positive development for the administration. Why would we jeopardize the passage of the USMCA? Why would we hurt our economy while trying to punish Mexico for not doing more—which they should do to stop the illegal passage of people across their country when there is a reasonable and responsible alternative.

I urge all of my colleagues to take a serious look at the HUMANE Act so we can finally do our part, which only we in Congress can do to stem the flow of Central American migrants who are flooding our borders and to prevent criminals and human smugglers from infiltrating our country as they are doing now.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DETER ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues for supporting the Defending Elections against Trolls from Enemy Regimes Act, aka the DETER Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation I introduced with the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Senator GRASSLEY.

This legislation would prevent foreign regimes from exploiting U.S. immigration laws to undermine U.S. elec-

tions. Specifically, it would make “improper interference in U.S. elections” a violation of immigration law.

Given the ongoing threat to the United States in terms of the integrity of our electoral process from Russian interference, we need to ensure that we are denying—and, if necessary, revoking—any visas to foreign nationals who seek to improperly interfere in our elections.

One of the most important takeaways from the Mueller report is that Russia successfully attacked America in 2016 by doing everything it could to undermine our election process.

Page 1 of the Mueller report says: “The Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion.”

The report detailed numerous examples of Russian interference, including an “intelligence-gathering mission” that employees of the Internet Research Agency—also known as the IRA—took in June of 2014. The IRA was the Russian troll farm that waged information warfare against the 2016 election with stolen identities, fake social media accounts, fake campaign events, and even attacking the voter list for the State of Illinois.

The report and the earlier indictment of several IRA employees noted that two of the Russians arrived in the United States for a 3-week trip “for the purpose of collecting intelligence to inform [IRA’s] operations.”

The DETER Act would respond to threats like this, barring foreign actors from traveling to our country to interfere in our elections. I thank my colleagues for supporting this important legislation which was approved on Monday night. I hope the U.S. House of Representatives will quickly pass it and send it to the President's desk for his signature.

This should be the first of many steps Congress takes to deter and punish future election interference by the Russians or by any foreign power.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mr. President, as a Presidential candidate, Donald Trump campaigned on a promise to the American people that he would “get tough” on immigrants and secure our border. We heard it loud and clear, didn't we. The wall was to be built by the Mexicans, accusing Mexicans coming into this country of being murderers and rapists. We heard it over and over and over again.

Now, more than 2 years into the Trump administration, it is clear that the President has failed in his efforts on immigration—especially when it comes to families and children. It is obvious our southern border today is much less secure than it was when Donald Trump took office.

Take a look at these numbers. They tell the story, a dramatic story. In fiscal year 2017, which was the end of the Obama administration and the beginning of the Trump administration, in 12 months, 303,000 people were appre-

hended at our border, including 75,000 families and 41,000 unaccompanied children. Now, 2 years later, the numbers are dramatically higher under President Trump's watch. Only 6 months into this fiscal year 2019, 361,000 people have already been apprehended at the border. It was 303,000 over a 12-month period 2 years ago, when the President took office; now, 361,000 in 6 months, including 189,000 families and 36,000 unaccompanied children. That is more total apprehensions in the first half of this year, in the first 6 months, than all 12 months of 2017.

The Department of Homeland Security has been engulfed in Trumpian chaos. In less than 2½ years of the Trump administration, there have already been four heads of the Department of Homeland Security—four—in 2½ years: Secretary John Kelly, Acting Secretary Elaine Duke, Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, and now Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan. Within the Department of Homeland Security, there have already been, under this administration, in a little over 2 years, four Acting Directors of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and three nominees to head this agency.

Under President Trump, ICE has never had a Director confirmed by this Republican-controlled Senate, which spends all of its time approving nominees. The Trump administration has never had a Director of ICE confirmed because the proposed nominees' names keep changing. In fact, every major position at the Department of Homeland Security is now held by a temporary appointee not confirmed by the Senate—not confirmed by the Republican-controlled Senate.

A major front in President Trump's war on immigrants has been his attack on Dreamers. Dreamers are young immigrants who came to the United States as infants, toddlers, and children. They have gone to school with our kids. They have given back to their communities as teachers, nurses, engineers, and even soldiers. They are American in every way except for their official immigration status.

In 2010, I joined with the late Republican Senator Dick Lugar of Indiana, on a bipartisan basis, calling on President Obama to use his legal authority to try to protect these Dreamers from deportation. President Obama responded by creating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA.

DACA provided a temporary 2-year legal status to Dreamers if they stepped forward, paid a filing fee, went through a criminal background check, registered with the government, and had nothing in their background that would disqualify them from staying in the United States.

More than 800,000 of these young people came forward. They received DACA protection. DACA has really given them their first chance, on a 2-year renewable basis, to not be afraid of deportation and to be able to legally

work and go to school in the United States. They used that opportunity well. They became soldiers of the United States, engineers, teachers, small business owners, and medical professionals, but on September 5, 2017, President Donald Trump repealed this program. Hundreds of thousands of Dreamers faced losing their work permits and being deported to countries they barely knew.

President Trump also terminated the temporary protected status program—known as TPS—for more than 300,000 immigrants. TPS allows nationals of another country who were in the United States to stay here legally if it is too dangerous to return to their country. The termination of this program by President Trump jeopardizes the safety of these immigrants, and many of them with American children, who number in the thousands.

When he announced the repeal of DACA, President Trump called on Congress to “legalize DACA,” but then he turned around and rejected numerous bipartisan proposals to protect the Dreamers.

Last year, I worked with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to craft a bipartisan agreement that included the Dream Act and path to citizenship for TPS holders. However, President Trump profanely rejected my legislation in a tense meeting in the Oval Office.

Instead, the President tried to put the entire hard-line immigration agenda on the backs of the Dreamers. He said he would only support legalization for these young people if Congress passed his plan—his complete plan—which would, among other things, slash legal immigration by more than 40 percent.

There is a lot of debate in this country about immigration, for sure, but we usually agree on a couple basics: First, we are a nation of immigrants. Second, many immigrants come to this country and work extremely hard for their families, for their future, creating businesses and opportunities at great personal sacrifice. The notion by some that we would cut back on legal immigration to this country at a time when we desperately need increases in our workforce is so shortsighted.

This plan to slash legal immigration by more than 40 percent by President Trump was rejected by the bipartisan Senate. It would have been the largest cut in legal immigration in almost a century. The President would have taken our Nation back to one of the darkest chapters, when we were closing immigration to certain groups across the board, discriminating against them in terms that are largely unacceptable to America today. Thank goodness, the Senate rejected this plan by a bipartisan supermajority.

Yesterday was quite a day here on Capitol Hill. The legislative achievement of the U.S. Senate yesterday: a unanimous consent request to strike a

coin to commemorate women’s suffrage. I was happy to support that, but that is what we did yesterday.

What happened across the Rotunda in the House of Representatives? Yesterday the House of Representatives responded to President Trump’s cruel decision on DACA and TPS. The House passed the American Dream and Promise Act on a bipartisan vote of 237 to 187.

I went over to stand on the floor of the House, where I served for a number of years, just to hear the debate and to thank my colleagues for their leadership. I want to call out especially the statements that were made and the support given by Speaker NANCY PELOSI, Majority Leader STENY HOYER, Judiciary Committee Chairman JERRY NADLER, Immigration Subcommittee Chair ZOE LOFGREN, and the lead sponsors of the bill Congresswoman LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, Congresswoman NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE, and my friend and fellow Illinoisan Congressman CHUY GARCÍA.

This vote was especially important to me because this legislation that they passed yesterday in the House of Representatives includes the Dream Act. It was 19 years ago that I introduced the first DREAM Act, bipartisan legislation that would give Dreamers a chance to earn their way to legal status and citizenship.

Now the eyes of hundreds of thousands of Dreamers have moved across the Capitol and are focused on the Senate. They are counting on us to solve the DACA crisis that President Trump has created. Will Majority Leader Senator MCCONNELL of Kentucky give them a chance? I certainly hope so. The Senate should send the American Dream and Promise Act to the President’s desk for his signature.

The Senate also has a responsibility to address the humanitarian crisis at our southern border, a crisis which this administration has made much, much worse.

When this President threatens to shut down the border, which he has on many occasions, it is like a neon sign to the smugglers to use this threat to encourage more desperate families to flee toward our border.

When the President says he is going to block all assistance to the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and shut down any avenues for legal migration, he just guarantees that more refugees in desperation will head to our borders.

Earlier this year, the President forced the longest government shutdown in the history of the United States, 35 days—35 days, when men and women who serve in our government in important jobs like air traffic control at our airports were denied their pay. Why would the President do this to these men and women and to others, thousands of others, in our Federal workforce? It was his desperate pursuit of his beloved border wall so he could

fulfill a campaign promise that he told us over and over and over again would be paid for by Mexico.

The Trump government shutdown paralyzed our immigration courts. For 35 days, they saw their backlogs increase. The backlog has already grown by close to 300,000 cases pending before those courts in the last two years. These courts play a critical role in processing cases of immigrants seeking asylum at our border.

Within the last week, the President has said he will impose tariffs on all goods coming into the United States from Mexico, which will raise prices on American consumers, kill jobs in America, and once again put the burden—the political burden—on farmers in the United States, including in Illinois.

The administration and its Republican allies in Congress argue that critical humanitarian protections for families and children are the real problem here. They claim with a straight face that we can better protect these migrants by making it easier to detain them indefinitely and deport them without any due process. But if people were migrating to the United States because of the so-called legal loopholes, which the administration keeps talking about, they would be coming from all over the region. They are not. The vast majority of families and children are not coming from Mexico but from the three countries in the Northern Triangle, as I mentioned earlier.

In April, I visited the port of entry in El Paso, TX, and a nearby Border Patrol station. What I saw in those overcrowded facilities was heartbreaking. There are detention cells where these migrants are being held. Over the door of one of these cells, which has a window that you can look into, it says: “Capacity: 35.” I counted close to 150 men standing shoulder to shoulder in that detention cell. They are served their meals, and they eat them standing up. There is room for maybe 20 or 30 to sit on benches. The rest stand all day and take turns at night lying on the floor. There is not room for them. I have since been told that this cell has increased its numbers from 150 to 200.

Next door to that cell was a sign outside of the door that read “Capacity: 16.” Inside that cell, I counted about 75 women, including nursing mothers with their babies. I have been told that this number has since dramatically increased as well.

How long will they be in these cells? I am told anywhere from 3 days to 6 weeks. As I said, one of the women cells had a capacity of 16. I looked in there, and it was painful to catch the eyes of those who are being held there, and they mouthed the word “Help.”

It has reached a point where over 20 Senators have joined me in writing to the International Red Cross, which inspects prison facilities around the world. We asked them to inspect our detention facilities on America’s border. It was a sad day to make the request, but it had to be made.

I also asked the DHS Acting Inspector General to investigate these Border Patrol facilities. Last week, the Inspector General's Office at DHS released a report detailing the inhumane and dangerous overflow of migrants at the El Paso port of entry. The Inspector General's Office found that overcrowding was "an immediate risk to the health and safety of detainees and DHS employees."

While we fail to even debate this issue here in Washington, we cannot overlook the inhumane conduct that is occurring at the border. We are better than that.

This notion of zero tolerance, where we separated 2,880 infants and toddlers from their parents, some of whom it took months to bring back together—to me, that does not speak well of who we are as a nation.

Look at this picture that was taken by the IG at one of the cells. Their faces are blanked out, but it gives an idea of the mass of humanity I counted—the IG found 76 women were in a cell for 12 people.

The Inspector General's report said that the Department of Homeland Security has been aware of the situation in El Paso for months but has not identified a process to alleviate overcrowding. Meanwhile, weeks ago, months ago, Congress passed an emergency appropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian care of these people at the border. It isn't as if we haven't given the administration resources to deal with at least the immediate crisis on their hands. The IG report said that DHS has been aware of this situation for months, but they haven't taken measures to deal with it. This report called on them to take immediate steps.

The Department of Homeland Security gave a target completion date of November 30, 2020—a year and a half from now—for the completion of a centralized processing center in El Paso. The Inspector General found this response completely inadequate, and so do I.

Democrats are serious about addressing this situation. There are some bottom-line standards that I think we all should look to.

First, we need border security, there is no doubt in my mind. In an age of terrorism, with the worst drug epidemic in the history of the United States, I want to know who is crossing our border and what they are bringing. Every American should want to know.

Secondly, there is no excuse for allowing a dangerous person to come into this country. If we know they are dangerous, they are not welcome. And if they are here in any questionable status and a danger to America, they have to go.

Third—and it pains me to say this as the son of an immigrant woman, but it is a fact—we cannot absorb all of the people in the world who want to come to the United States. It is not economically or even physically possible for

that to happen. We have to have standards when it comes to immigration.

Once we have established those three standards, shouldn't we come together, Democrats and Republicans, and rewrite our immigration laws, this broken system that has led to this point? It will not be solved by threats of walls, by threats of closing the borders, by threats of cutting off foreign aid. That makes the situation even worse, and, sadly, President Trump has proven that point in the 2-plus years he has been in office.

I am serious about addressing this, deadly serious about what it means to Dreamers and people here in temporary protected status. In February, after the President finally ended his government shutdown, I helped write an omnibus appropriations bill. We put \$564 million in the bill for inspection equipment so we could scan and x ray every car and truck coming into the United States and grab the narcotics at the border before they make it to my hometown and yours. I hope we all agree on that. There was \$414 million in that bill for humanitarian assistance. I can't tell you how that is being spent.

We could do more to make sure that even in the midst of political controversy, our border is secure and our treatment of these desperate people is humane and that we will be able to answer to history for how we are conducting ourselves.

Democrats have introduced the Central America Reform and Enhancement Act as a comprehensive response to this problem.

We need to address the root causes in the Northern Triangle countries that are driving these migrants here.

We need to crack down on the cartels and traffickers who are exploiting these migrants.

We need to provide for in-country processing, which the Obama administration provided for and the Trump administration eliminated. What it meant was that residents in those three countries did not have to make a dangerous and expensive trip across Mexico to our border to find out if they were eligible for asylum; they could do it in their home country. The Obama administration had that program. The Trump administration eliminated it, and people started making that trip across Mexico to test whether they were legally eligible to stay in this country.

In that Democratic bill, we eliminate immigration court backlogs so that asylum claims could be processed more quickly.

We stand ready to work on smart, effective, and humane border security policies. But the President needs to be part of the solution. If this is about his reelection, appealing to his base, and being tougher and tougher, I could tell him: It is not working, Mr. President. It is not working for the good of this country. Perhaps your political base finds it appealing, but I think the American people are now looking for

solutions. They want us to work on a bipartisan basis. We have a chance and an opportunity.

The House of Representatives' action yesterday, I hope, is the beginning of a meaningful dialogue to deal with this crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from South Dakota.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, our economy has made tremendous strides over the past 2 years. Americans on the whole have access to more jobs, higher wages, and more opportunities. Unfortunately, our Nation's agricultural economy is trailing behind the broader economy.

A combination of low commodity prices, protracted trade disputes, and natural disasters and weather-related issues have left many farmers and ranchers struggling. Nationwide, net farm income is about half of what it was in 2013—half.

In my home State of South Dakota, farmers and ranchers are currently facing the fallout from severe winter storms, heavy rainfall, bomb cyclones, and spring flooding. Less than half of this year's acreage intended for corn has been planted. Compare that to this time last year, when 96 percent of our State's corn was in the ground and growing. Today, just 14 percent of South Dakota's soybeans have been planted, compared to 83 percent this time last year. To make matters worse, for many farmers, this year's planting season is already over, as their land is completely flooded and will not dry out in time for anything to be planted. Other States that produce the bulk of our country's corn and soybeans are facing similar planting challenges.

There have been some recent wins for farmers and ranchers. The administration's announcement that it is lifting the ban on the year-round sale of E15—15 percent ethanol-blended fuel—is great news for corn producers in South Dakota and around the Nation. It is a big win for consumers, too, who will have access to this cleaner, lower cost fuel during the summer driving season for the first time. I have spent nearly my entire time in the Senate advocating for higher blends of ethanol, and I am pleased the Trump administration has followed through on its commitment to address this issue.

Another recent win was Japan's announcement that it was lifting age limits on U.S. beef imports, giving America's ranchers full access to the Japanese market. CNBC reports that the U.S. Meat Export Federation predicts that Japan's move could increase U.S. beef sales to Japan by \$150 million to \$200 million per year.

While these victories are important, there is a lot more work to be done to get our Nation's farmers and ranchers back on their feet. I hear regularly from South Dakota ag producers about the challenges they are facing, and I constantly share their concerns with

the administration, whether I am meeting with the President or other officials.

One of the biggest things we can do for our Nation's farmers and ranchers is secure trade deals that will open new markets for American agricultural products.

I support the President's efforts to secure more favorable treatment for American products and his determination to ensure that China honors the trade commitments it has made, but I believe we need to wrap up negotiations on these various agreements we are discussing as quickly as possible. Along with increased market access, farmers and ranchers need certainty about what international markets are going to look like.

I am committed to doing everything I can to advance trade agreements with Japan and with the European Union. I am also doing everything I can to move the United States-Mexico-Canada free-trade agreement through Congress in the near future. This agreement would benefit American agriculture, create jobs, and grow our economy, and we should pass it as soon as possible. We should be wary of any action that might jeopardize this trade agreement and the markets it will open for our producers.

Another issue of concern to farmers and ranchers is the implementation of the 2018 farm bill. Getting a pro-agriculture, pro-farmer bill to the President was one of my top priorities last year, and I am proud of the bill we delivered.

I took ideas and suggestions from South Dakota farmers and ranchers and developed more than 40 proposals aimed at making life better for American agricultural producers. Nearly 20 of my proposals were included in the final bill, including my new short-term, soil-building conservation program for farmers who don't want to tie up ground for 10 years or more in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Now that the farm bill is law, we have to make sure that it is implemented in a timely manner and as Congress intended. I have spent years pushing for an increase in the Conservation Reserve Program's acreage cap, and we finally got a substantial increase in last year's bill.

The Department of Agriculture needs to expedite both general and continual CRP signups to allow farmers to take full advantage of that cap increase. I have been strongly urging the Department to make sure that farmers can sign up in a timely manner. Taking millions of acres of environmentally sensitive land out of crop production in the next year could have a big impact on the farm economy by driving up commodity prices and increasing farmers' profits, but in order for this to happen, we need to make sure that farmers can get their least productive land enrolled in the CRP program and out of crop production by next year.

South Dakota farmers and ranchers are the lifeblood of our State, and I am

committed to doing everything I can to address their needs here in Washington. In addition to working on trade issues and farm bill implementation, I am working with the Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency to ensure that our farmers are treated fairly under crop insurance prevent plant and cover crop rules.

I have been working with the Agriculture Department to make certain the recently announced second round of Market Facilitation Program payments do not affect this year's planting decisions. I have also requested that this second round of MFP payments provide equitable assistance to all producers, especially those with failed and damaged crops or who were prevented from planting this year's crops due to adverse weather.

And, as I said, I will continue to push for trade agreements with China and other countries so that our Nation's farmers receive a check from the sale of their products overseas instead of from the Department of Agriculture.

I also recently led a letter to the President in support of Governor Noem's request for a major disaster declaration in South Dakota, and 2 weeks ago I voted in favor of the Additional Supplemental Appropriations Act, which would provide additional disaster funding for States and Territories harmed by last year's hurricanes and wildfires and this year's flooding. The bill also includes \$3 billion to provide assistance for farmers' crop losses from the 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

Our Nation's farmers and ranchers have a tough, backbreaking job. Instead of air-conditioned and heated offices, they labor in the hot Sun, the cold rain, and the snow. They start their days before the Sun rises and often end them long after the Sun falls. Most Americans never think about the blood, sweat, and tears that have gone into that loaf of bread or that gallon of milk that they grab off the grocery store shelf, but we are all the beneficiaries of the hard work and the dedication of our Nation's farmers and ranchers. It is an honor to represent so many of these hard-working people here in the Senate.

To South Dakota's farmers and ranchers, I want to say I hear you. I know that things have been incredibly tough for you all over the past few years. I know that you are fighting through a lot of challenges, and I am committed to making sure that Washington addresses your priorities, and I will do everything that I can to make sure that you have access to the support and the resources you need to continue feeding our Nation and the world. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this weekend another community was torn apart by gun violence. Once again, politicians do what so many politicians in this body do. They offer thoughts and prayers to the people of Virginia Beach, and then they move on. It is tragic, and it is obscene how routine this has become in our country and how routine that reaction from far too many politicians—from the White House on down—has become.

This month we mark Gun Violence Awareness Month, but in our country every month, every week, and every day we endure senseless gun violence. Congress has ignored for too long the millions of Americans who want reasonable gun safety measures instead of doing the bidding of the gun lobby.

We cannot say we are doing what it takes to keep our country safe until we are finally willing to pass common-sense laws to protect all Americans from gun violence. Many of us have tried.

I supported the original Federal assault weapons ban in 1994. I joined with many of my colleagues to vote to renew it after Sandy Hook. Weapons of war and assault weapons do not belong on our streets.

We have tried to pass legislation to close loopholes in our background check system so that people who buy guns on the internet or at gun shows have to go through the same background checks as law-abiding gun owners who buy their guns at stores in Ohio.

After the tragedy at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, we tried to pass legislation to prevent people on the terrorist watch list from buying guns. If you are too dangerous to get on an airplane—if the government says you can't ride in the plane because you are on the terrorist watch list—it should be too dangerous for you to buy a deadly weapon. But this body is so, so in the pocket of the NRA that they will not even pass legislation like that. The gun lobby, again, stood in the way. We know what happened each and every time. They stood in the way, despite the fact that the laws we are talking about would not undermine the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

I respect the rights of hunters, of collectors, and of responsible law-abiding gun owners. No one is trying to take away their guns. When our students aren't safe in our schools, it is clear that something has to be done. When workers aren't safe on the job, it is clear that we have to do something. When too many Americans don't feel safe going about their daily lives in their communities, we can't sit here and do nothing.

We will not give up on making our country safer. We will keep working until we get weapons of war out of our schools, out of our workplaces, out of our neighborhoods, and out of our

places of worship. Creating change in our country isn't easy. It requires going up against powerful special interests. Few are as powerful as the NRA. Change never starts in Washington. We make progress because of grassroots movements of Americans all across our country demanding action. From Marches for Our Lives to the Women's March, to the activism around the Affordable Care Act, Americans proved again and again and again the power of activism. Mothers and fathers, students and teachers all across this country who stood up and marched for gun safety are the people we sent here to serve, not the special interest gun lobby.

I hope my colleagues will not so easily forget what happened in Virginia Beach and at the Poway synagogue and in Pittsburgh and in Parkland and in Orlando and at the Capital Gazette in Annapolis and in Las Vegas and in Sandy Hook and in our neighborhoods around this country every month, every week, and every day.

NOMINATION OF SUSAN COMBS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to speak in strong support of the nomination of Ms. Susan Combs, of Texas, to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget at the Department of the Interior.

This is one of five Assistant Secretary positions at Interior, and, as the title suggests, it is critical to the Department's ability to function. The individual who holds this position is responsible for overseeing everything from the annual budget request to financial management, procurement, and policy and program analysis.

The President's nominee, Susan Combs, is very well qualified. She has previously served as a State representative, as agriculture commissioner, and as comptroller in her home State of Texas. Over the years, Ms. Combs has worked extensively with the Department of the Interior, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has helped her gain substantive expertise about a range of issues that she will face in her new role.

My only wish is that we could have confirmed Ms. Combs long ago. Instead, due to holds and delays here on the Senate floor, she ultimately had to be reported from the Energy and Natural Resources committee on three separate occasions—in 2017, in 2018, and again this year. She is not controversial. Each time, we reported her with bipartisan support. But she has now been forced to wait for a total of nearly 700 days for confirmation, meaning she will have held up for longer than she will be able to serve, at least in the current term.

I appreciate Ms. Combs' willingness to serve our country. I appreciate her patience over the course of nearly 2 full years, which is testament to just how broken the nominations process had become, and her commitment to see this through. I also thank Leader

McCONNELL for scheduling this vote and encourage every Member of this Chamber to vote in favor of confirmation.

Mr. BROWN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Combs nomination?

Mr. BROWN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or to change their vote?

The result was announced—yeas 57, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 141 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Barrasso	Gardner	Paul
Blackburn	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hawley	Risch
Braun	Hoeven	Roberts
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Cantwell	Inhofe	Rounds
Capito	Isakson	Rubio
Cassidy	Johnson	Sasse
Collins	Jones	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	King	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sinema
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Manchin	Thune
Daines	McConnell	Tillis
Enzi	McSally	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Young

NAYS—36

Baldwin	Harris	Rosen
Bennet	Hassan	Schatz
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cardin	Kaine	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Udall
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murray	Warner
Durbin	Peters	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Reed	Wyden

NOT VOTING—7

Alexander	Markey	Warren
Booker	Moran	
Gillibrand	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in this series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Ryan T. Holte, of Ohio, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Mitch McConnell, Roy Blunt, Joni Ernst, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Thom Tillis, John Kennedy, John Boozman, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Richard Burr, John Barrasso, Lindsey Graham, Rick Scott.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Ryan T. Holte, of Ohio, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 60, nays 33, as follows: